

The REAL AGATHA

BY **EDITH HUNTINGTON MASON**

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There was an instant of dead silence, and then to my surprise my left-hand neighbor, Agatha Third, rose to her feet, and, with quivering lips, started to say something. But she had hardly time to rise before the other five girls sprang to their feet, and raising their glasses, Agatha Third with the rest, they cried with one voice: "To the Honorable Agatha!" and although it seemed to me that Agatha Third had very nearly let the cat out of the bag by rising, as if to acknowledge the courtesy, yet by the promptness of the other girls the day was partially retrieved, and Vincent and I were still somewhat at a loss as to the identity of our fair and wealthy hostess.

I asked Vincent afterward what he made of Agatha Third's behavior. "It looked to me," said that young person, "as if those girls had themselves so much in command that they would never betray the secret they're guarding, no matter what you did."

"But didn't you see Agatha Third get up before the others did?" I said, excitedly. "She gave herself away. I tell you, Wilfred, she's the real honorable, without a doubt. There can be no two ways about it!"

"How keen you are!" he said; "and I tell you what it is, Archibald—Vincent always calls me 'Archibald' with the 'i' left out and the emphasis on 'bald' when he's particularly affectionate or sleepy; he was the latter just now—I'm just as keen about marrying this heiress as you are; the only difference is that I insist upon being in love with her into the bargain, and you don't. For I'm hard up, fear-

fully hard up, you know, and the governor's so awfully good, I hate to ask him for another month's allowance just now. I'm 'way behind as it is, and I owe Jack Gordon for that prize polo pony of his. I offered him \$100 for her the day of the Hurlingham games and he sold her to me on the spot. Jack's as hard up as I am—poor fellow. And then, you know, it's all perfectly fair. If we only had the time, that's all. It's pretty quick work to expect a man to find out the heiress, learn to love her and teach her to love him, all in six weeks, and propose on the last day of—"

"But that's just it," I interrupted. "you're not expected to find out the heiress first. That's just what old Fletcher Boyd wanted to prevent when he made the will."

"Nevertheless, you yourself mean to find out first, don't you, Arch?" was Vincent's facetious response.

I was disgusted and made no answer.

"Of course," he went on, "I wouldn't propose to any girl I didn't love, but I'd like the chance to learn to love this particular lady, the Honorable Agatha. I feel that there would be no

trouble about her learning to love me!" Vincent has few really serious faults, but I don't attempt to deny that he is conceited.

"The trouble is," he said, "they're all so attractive I could love one as well as another. I wish, though, I could just naturally fall in love with one of them, and I'd propose to her on the last day and take my chances. Who knows? I'm sometimes lucky. I might win the prize!"

"So you might," I said, "but as it is, we haven't even discovered the heiress as yet—"

"And I can't fall in love with any of 'em," finished Vincent, "because I'm madly in love with the whole six, and there you are!" and he shook his head hopelessly. "Come, let's to bed," he added.

"Not just yet, Freddy," I said. I never call him that, as I have before stated, but his hair was all rumpled up and his face flushed and I felt warm toward him because he was so dense. "Surely with a rival as unob-servant as he is," I thought, "I am not heavily handicapped." For I had made up my mind that Agatha Third was indeed the real and only Agatha. That involuntary rising of hers was proof positive.

"I say, Vincent," I called after him, "was that a master stroke of yours, giving the toast that way? Did you intend to try to surprise one of them into betraying herself?"

Vincent laughed sleepily. "Good old Archibald," he drawled, "you're always looking for master strokes, but 'pon my honor I never thought of such a thing." And I might have known that he wouldn't.

Left to myself, I was thinking out my plan of campaign as regarded Agatha Third when a slight noise in the back of the room attracted my attention. I looked up, startled, for it was late, and the large, dimly lighted drawing room was rather an eerie place, and saw over the back of my chair the slight form of the secretary approaching. Her hair was as neat as usual and her dress was the same simple gray gown she wore when I had seen her first.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Terhune," she said, timidly, yet without hesitation. "I am sorry to disturb you, but would you have the goodness to give me a little of your time?"

"Certainly," I replied, rising, "though the hour is late. Won't you be seated?" and I found her a chair. The secretary leaned back against it and folded her hands.

"I shall be quick," she said; "but I want to ask you something." She spoke in a low voice, but with perfect composure, though she never lifted her eyes. I caught myself wondering whether she cast them down habitually, so that people might observe the length of her black eyelashes.



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MARSHALL, MO.

"Yes!" I said, to encourage her. "Of course, you know Lord Vincent very well, don't you?" As she asked me this direct question she looked me full in the face, and as my eyes met hers I mentally thanked her for her mercy in not often permitting man to gaze into them.

"Yes," I said, recovering myself, "I know him very well."

"And he tells you things, doesn't he?"

"Most things," I replied, wondering at what she was driving.

"Then could you tell me, please, if—if he accepted Miss Agatha—the one with the hazel eyes that you call Agatha Fifth—when she told him she loved him?"

I was never more astounded in my life. How did she know that Agatha Fifth had told Vincent she loved him, and how did it concern her? Perhaps, however, she was acting under Mrs. Armstrong's orders, but if so she ought to have said so.

"That's a question of a very personal nature," I said, and eyed her searchingly; "but I don't think Lord Vincent would mind, as long as you know so much about it, if I tell you that he refused the young lady who was indiscreet enough to ask him to marry her."

The secretary gave a sudden start, and then, by what seemed to be considerable effort, regained control of herself.

"He refused her," I continued—for the girl and her questions and her genuine feeling interested me—"although she told him she was the real Honorable Agatha." I was so proud of Vincent for that that I was glad to be able to tell someone about it.

"She said that—and he refused her?" repeated the girl in an awed tone. "How could he do it, how could he?"

"Then it was true? She is really the daughter of Fletcher Boyd?" I cried eagerly. At last I had stumbled upon the truth, for I knew the secretary was in the secret.

But she only smiled at me. "You are a good man," she said, "a good man."

The room was growing chilly and the fire was getting low, and as she spoke she slipped down from the high chair and seated herself on a little stool at my feet, stretching out her slim hands toward the blaze. "I thank you," she said, simply, and gazed into the fire a moment, while I gazed at her slender young figure, her pink and white skin, straight, little nose, and wide, red mouth with its Du Maurier chin—and all in a moment I felt myself pitying the poor little girl. Vincent was such an attractive young scamp, he might be playing fast and loose with her affections without intending it or realizing that he was doing so. Involuntarily I leaned toward her.

"My dear young lady," I said, and as I spoke I caught myself thinking her really good looking. "If she only did her hair decently," I thought, "I'd call her a beauty. I really believe I should." "My dear young lady," I said, "tell me in confidence and perhaps I can help you. Do you—er—are you—er—interested in Lord Wilfred? If so, allow me, I conjure you, nay, I beg of you, to put all thought of him out of your head. He doesn't mean it, but he is a graceless young flirt. He doesn't mean a word he says. Let me warn you—be advised—"

I stopped short. In the midst of my well-meant flow of words, I stopped short, for, could I believe my eyes, the secretary was laughing at me.

"My dear old man," she said—she did, actually—"my dear old man, your warnings are superfluous, for I am a married woman," and, still laughing, she left the room.

CHAPTER V.

Alone, I sat for a moment speechless with astonishment, as the secretary left the room, and as I took my way slowly and thoughtfully upstairs, I resolved that this was another thing that I would not tell Vincent; he would be far more likely to ridicule me than to thank me for my effort in his behalf.

Some time after this, on a perfect day, Agatha Third and I—I had spent almost every hour since the dinner in her company. I may remark—had planned a little excursion which would keep us outdoors all day. We were going on a picnic up the little river. Have you ever tried a picnic for two? Given the right companion and a day like that, I'd warrant it to cure any attack of the blues. Agatha Third had assured me that the prettiest spot for our luncheon was a little island in the center of the stream where the current ran broad and deep, about three miles below the castle.

The day was fair, the girl was fairer, and the moments were full of joy to me. We had crossed a little bridge about a mile from the castle and were proceeding up the left bank of the

river when a sudden turn of the stream brought two others of our house party into view. On the opposite bank was Vincent in high boots, knickerbockers, white shirt with sleeves rolled up, and a farmer's broad-brimmed hat of straw. He was busy over a broken fishing rod which he was trying to mend. In the center of the stream, where the current ran swift and dangerously deep, a girl stood on a large boulder, fishing. Other boulders at intervals between the one she was standing on and the shore where Vincent was indicated the means by which she had attained her precarious position. I recognized the girl as Agatha Second, and smiled pityingly as I thought of poor Vincent, invariably wasting his time with the wrong Agatha.

"Hello!" they cried, cheerfully, and we waved our hands and asked them what luck they'd had. This isn't always a safe question to ask a fisherman, but I notice that people who are not fishing themselves invariably find great satisfaction in asking it. Vincent said he hadn't caught any fish, and asked if I'd landed mine yet. Just like his impudence! He'd say anything if he thought it was funny, no matter how it might annoy other people.

Just as I was thinking of some retort polite enough to utter aloud, Agatha Second's rod began to bend and jerk, and immediately there was so much action going on that in my excitement I forgot what I was about to say. I am a fisherman of some skill myself. Well, the pole began to bend and the Agatha on the rock began to scream, and Vincent shouted directions from the bank—"Easy there, easy," he entreated her; "give him more line, Aggie, more line."

"I can't!" she screamed at the top of her voice; "something's caught, and he pulls so!"

"The reel!" I shouted, jumping up and down. "The reel! Press the knob and let her go!"

I knew in a moment the sort she had. It was just like mine, a patent one with a spring reel—mine often stuck that way. All this time the fish was leaping about, sometimes jumping out of the water so that we could see him, and he was a big fellow.

"Let me alone; I can do it myself," cried the girl, as Vincent started to help her, but even as she spoke her trim little foot slipped on the wet stone, and, losing her balance completely, she fell backward into the deep water, while the rod disappeared upstream.

In a moment Vincent was running at top speed along the bank till he came to a little point of land near which the drowning girl must pass. As she approached he leaped into the water, and, striking diagonally upstream, seized her by her clothing, and, fighting his way back, safely gained the point of land. Meantime I had run up the river toward a boat that I had observed near the bank. Jumping in, I soon reached the spot where lay the unconscious form of Agatha Second. All this time I was dimly aware of the fact that Agatha Third had never stopped screaming and was now running up and down on the opposite bank sobbing and wringing her hands. When I reached Wilfred he was anxiously bending over the girl, but apparently without the slightest idea what to do.

I immediately fell to chafing her hands and resorting to the other well-known expedients for reviving the drowned, and to enable her to breathe more freely I removed the tight-fitting dickey of her sailor suit. It was not long before she began to regain consciousness, and it was at this moment that I made a most amazing discovery, for around the neck of the girl I saw a little silver chain, and on it was strung a heavy gold ring set with a large cross of old-fashioned emeralds.

I called to Vincent, and as I pointed at the magnificent and telltale piece of jewelry we both gazed at it, speechless with surprise at discovering in such a manner the secret of the Honorable Agatha's identity. Before she had quite regained her consciousness I readjusted her dickey, and when she was able to stand, we wrapped her in our coats and carried her to the boat. There wasn't room in it for more than two, so I made Vincent get in with her and row back to the castle. So they left us, and Agatha Third and I, too thoroughly upset by the accident to wish to carry through our picnic, followed them back, walking one on each side of the stream until we reached the bridge, where we joined forces.

As we returned I did a great deal of thinking. So it was Agatha Second, after all, who was the real Honorable Agatha. For certainly her possession of the Wyckhoff ring, mentioned in the will, was proof positive. Now that I thought of it the suspicious circum-

stances of Agatha Third's seemingly involuntary rising when Vincent toasted the Honorable Agatha, admitted of many explanations. At any rate, whatever her reason for her action, the presence of the Wyckhoff ring on the neck of Agatha Second had proved to me the falsity of that other clew and the identity of our fair but mysterious hostess.

The next morning when she came down to breakfast I inquired with great concern as to the effects of the accident of the day previous. She replied most kindly that she felt very nearly as well as ever and thanked me earnestly for my share in her rescue. In fact, her gratitude was so profuse as to make me uncomfortable, and I protested volubly that what I had done was nothing. Nevertheless, from that day on Agatha Second clung to me in a manner that was almost touching. Vincent, to my surprise, instead of taking advantage of his part as hero, seemed rather anxious to avoid the girl, whereas, before our mutual discovery, he had seemed to be quite taken with her. Although his conduct was a puzzle to me, yet I could only rejoice that it was so, for it left the field absolutely free to me, and I felt as each day passed that now, indeed, I was hotter on the trail of that twenty millions than I had yet been.

To be continued next week.

County News

From Our Exchanges

ARROW ROCK

WILL Diggs, J. W. Nixon, B. L. Thompson and Frank Luskew went to Booneville Monday to see about getting Oscar F. Far out on bail. The judge had fixed his bond at \$500 and the four above-named gentlemen and R. M. Wooten signed it and the young man was released and came home with them. Oscar should profit by this lesson and in appreciation to what his friends have done for him do his very best in the future.

Dr. Gore of Marshall, who here Monday was elated in to see Mrs. J. F. Spence. We understand he could offer but little in encouragement for the bettering of her condition. Mrs. Spence is confined to her bed this week and is considerably weaker than she was as a week. —Charley Lawes having decided to move to Kansas City sold his personal property household goods etc., at a public auction here last Saturday. His wife and children will live with her parents near Miami during the holidays. Charley will go to Kansas City where we understand he has the promise of a position as motorman or conductor on a street car. —John Liggitt, who for the past year or more has been running a saw mill below town moved his mill Tuesday to the western part of the county. He passed through town with his outfit and it looked like a young freight train. —Statesman.

A Healthy Family

"Our whole family has enjoyed good health since we began using Dr. King's New Life Pills, three years ago," says L. A. Bartlett, of Rural Route 1, Guilford, Maine. They cleanse and tone the system in a gentle way that does you good. 25c at all druggists.

SWEET SPRINGS

Frank Cook who has been in New Mexico for the past several months on a claim preparatory to proving up on it, came in this week and will be here several weeks. —G. A. Arndt and wife returned home Sunday from Orchard, Neb., where they had been for two weeks visiting their daughter, Mrs. John Scafield. They made the trip to witness the marriage of their daughter, Miss Sophia Arndt, to Mr. Wm. Rice, of Orchard. —Miss Nora Diggs of Arrow Rock, arrived Saturday and spent a few days with her brother Rev. J. C. Diggs returning to her home Monday afternoon. —Col. W. R. Alexander of Houstonia passed through this city Saturday and cried the sale of Henry Mueller two miles northwest of town. The sale was a good one, a big crowd in attendance and things sold well. —Herald.

Where Bullets Flew

David Parker, of Fayette, N. Y., a veteran of the civil war, who lost a foot at Gettysburg, says: "The good Electric Bitters have done is worth more than five hundred dollars to me. I spent much money doctoring for a bad case of stomach trouble, to little purpose. I then tried Electric Bitters, and they cured me. I now take them as a tonic, and they keep me strong and well." 50c at all drug stores.

BLACKBURN

A BIRD EAGLE—A few days ago J. C. Drew was in our office to re-

new his subscription to the Record. He informed us that he had killed an eagle at his farm, two and one-half miles southeast of Blackburn, trying to carry off a full grown duck. He called it a grey eagle, but from his description we are satisfied that it was a bald eagle. He is talking of having it mounted. —Record.

J. D. Price and Amie Loe returned Sunday afternoon from St. Louis. They had gone down with four loads of cattle owned by Mr. Price. —John Logsdon moved his family from Marshall to the farm south of town Monday. We extend them a hearty welcome to their old home after many years' absence. —H. S. Hokey has so far recovered from his recent paralytic stroke as to be driven up town Wednesday afternoon. We are glad that he's better and hope he will continue to improve. —Mrs. L. D. Curtis and daughter Miss Nellie have returned from a trip to Montezuma, New Mexico. —Record.

A Hearty Appetite

Is what most babies have, but is of no benefit to them if they have worms. Be sure your baby is not troubled with them. Sure symptoms—always hungry, rings under the eyes, not gaining in weight and yellow complexion. A few doses of White's Cream Vermifuge will expel all worms. It is a positive cure and reliable. Price 25c per bottle. Sold by P. H. Franklin.

SLATER

M. L. Francis returned the last part of last week from California, where he has had a position since the first of the year. —Mrs. George Harris and Mrs. G. P. Sullivan and daughter of Miami township left here last Tuesday afternoon for Shawnee, Oklahoma, where they are the guests of Mrs. A. L. Chitty. —The Kansas City Star of last Saturday announces that a suit was filed in the Jackson county circuit court, by Mrs. Katherine Stidham against H. G. Stidham for divorce. Mr. and Mrs. Stidham formerly lived at this place, Mr. Stidham being the station agent for the Altam for several years. He went to California about a year ago and his wife and little daughter left soon afterward and most people supposed they also went to California, but it has since been learned that they have been living in Kansas City. —Rustler.

GILLIAM

Dr. Osborne reports that Mrs. Davidson underwent a successful operation in Kansas City for appendicitis last Saturday and is rapidly improving. —F. M. Heinzel returned Tuesday from his trip to Oklahoma. He was over seven counties and likes everything he saw. He says Albert Zahl has a good farm and is well satisfied there. —Globe.

At a meeting held here Tuesday afternoon by a number of fanciers, and poultry breeders, the Missouri Valley Poultry Association was formed by the election of T. E. Quisenberry, president; Dr. Hick and Mr. Frank Evans and Rev. Wm. Heslar, vice-presidents; A. W. Genter, secretary; Mrs. Ed J. Darg, assistant secretary; C. H. O. Leimbach, treasurer. Executive committee: T. E. Quisenberry, A. W. Genter, Mrs. Chas. Petry, F. C. Leiter. The association expects to have a show in January in some town in Saline County and we trust Gilliam will take the matter up and offer such inducements as will be necessary to get the exhibition. Much good is accomplished by these associations, and it is the hope of the organizers that every fancier, breeder and poultry raiser in this county become a member. —Gilliam Globe.

I Would Mortgage the Farm

A farmer on Rural Route 2, Empire, Ga., W. A. Floyd by name, says: "Bucklen's Arnica Salve cured the two worst sores I ever saw; one on my hand and one on my leg. It is worth more than its worth in gold. I would not be without it if I had to mortgage the farm to get it." Only 25c at all druggists.

HOUSTONIA

J. B. Greer, J. M. Greer, Joe Greer, L. S. Tevis, John Montgomery, Phil Montgomery and A. E. Rice of east of Houstonia left Monday night for a trip to San Antonio, where some of them will probably purchase land. —J. R. Wecker, A. H. Kilborn and T. A. McAllister left Tuesday for Pryor Creek, Okla., to look over the land with a view to investing. —Houstonian.